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PIC: ASHWIN PRASATH

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INDIA SECURE BRONZE, GERMANY LIFT JUNIOR HOCKEY CROWN

India produced a brave-heart performance to nullify a two-goal deficit to beat Argentina 4-2 in the third-place play-off in Chennai on Wednesday

SET PIECE GOALS HELP HOSTS

On a night when nothing worked for India, they managed to win and convert four deadball situations; three penalty corners and one penalty stroke. Arshdeep Singh won each of India's first three set-pieces in the 4th quarter. Ankit Pal converted the first while Manmeet Singh the second. Shardanand Tiwari struck from the spot while Anmol Ekka scored the last

SREEJESH REMAINS COY ON WHAT NEXT

- Over the last 12 months, coach PR Sreejesh has dedicated his time to mould this squad. When asked if he will remain with the junior programme, ex-India goalkeeper said he will continue to learn
- Germany, who breezed past India in the semifinals, beat Spain 3-2 via penalties to win an incredible eighth title at this level | P15

04

INDIA WON 4TH MEDAL AT THIS EVENT (GOLD IN 2001 & 2016, SILVER IN 1997)

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

US gives mixed signals as trade talks resume

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

AS the US and India look to finalise a broader bilateral trade agreement, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer has said that India's offers are "the best Washington has received", though challenges remain in getting New Delhi to open up its agriculture sector.

TARIFF TRACKER

"There is resistance in India for certain crops and meats and products. They are a difficult nut to crack... but they have been quite forward leaning. The types of offers they have been talking to us about are one of the best that we have ever received as a country," said Greer while speaking at a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing in Washington, DC.

The comments came as the US trade negotiation team led by Deputy Trade Representative Rick Switzer commenced the two-day talks in New Delhi on Wednesday. On the first day, he held discussions with Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal. Both reviewed the ongoing negotiations for the agreement.

Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch is the US' chief negotiator. India's chief negotiator is Darpan Jain, Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce. India's former chief negotiator and current Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal will be supervising the progress of the negotiations.

US team during negotiations with Indian officials in New Delhi on Wednesday | X

"The two sides exchanged views on matters related to India-US trade and economic ties, including on the ongoing negotiations for a mutually beneficial Bilateral Trade Agreement," the Department of Commerce said.

Meanwhile, speaking on the sidelines of the Pravasi Rajasthani Divas in Jaipur on Wednesday, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal reiterated that the ongoing trade negotiations with the US are progressing well.

"Talks are continuously progressing. We are moving forward towards a bilateral trade agreement," Goyal said.

They have been a tough nut to crack... but they have been quite forward leaning. The type of offers they have been talking to us about have been the best

— US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer

AMAZON TO INVEST $35 BN MORE IN INDIA

A day after Microsoft committed $17.5 billion investment in India to help build AI capabilities, Amazon said it will invest $35 billion in India over the next five years to expand its businesses in the country from quick commerce to cloud computing and AI. The $35-billion investment, the company said, would create one million job opportunities and quadruple cumulative e-commerce exports to $80 billion by 2030. Amazon has 1.7 million sellers in India. Of these, over 200,000 export to more than 200 countries and have generated $20 billion in cumulative exports. Since 2010, Amazon has invested $40 billion in India. P13

MIDDAY MEALS

It's worms on the plate for kids in Koppal

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @Koppal

GOVERNMENT schools in some parts of Koppal district are getting foodgrains infested with worms which are finding their way into the midday meals of schoolchildren.

On Tuesday, a school in Bisaralli village of Koppal taluk found worms in rice. Last week, a school in Muddenahalli of Kushtagi taluk faced a similar issue, posing a serious health risk to children. Officials said that no action has been taken despite complaining to higher authorities many times.

In all, 2.8 lakh children are provided with midday meals every day in Koppal district.

Children's parents demanded that officials should check midday meals prepared at all government schools. Some parents also alleged that school committees or management could be purchasing low quality foodgrains and swindling money.

An official said, "Rice is supplied from various godowns in the district, while ingredients like dal, oil and others, are supplied by agencies. Private contractors may have supplied poor quality rice and dal. We will look into the problem and report to our senior officials soon."

REPLY TO OPPOSITION

Want to remove all infiltrators: Shah

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

A combative Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday hit out at the Opposition in the Lok Sabha for its campaign against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging that the Opposition wanted to keep infiltrators on the voter list.

The Narendra Modi government's policy, Shah said, was unambiguous — "detect all aliens from the rolls and throw them out of the country." Shah said that the Opposition had raised the issue only because it could no longer win elections through "corrupt practices," asserting that "the Congress' repeated poll defeats stemmed from its leadership and not from EVMs or vote theft."

Intervening in the debate on electoral reforms, Shah rebutted the Opposition's charges. His 90-minute speech saw frequent interruptions from Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, who challenged him to a debate on his three press conferences alleging "vote chori" by the BJP.

The heated exchanges eventually led to an Opposition walkout. Seeking to corner the Congress, Shah claimed three episodes of "vote chori" involving party icons, Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi. He said Nehru became Prime Minister in 1947 despite having fewer internal votes than Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel; that Indira Gandhi granted herself immunity after her election was set aside by courts. He said the dispute of the third "vote chori" has just reached the civil courts on how Sonia Gandhi "became a voter before becoming a citizen of India," a remark that invited sharp reactions from the Congress benches.

Shah said SIR was a long-standing administrative exercise to maintain integrity of elections. No party, he said, had opposed SIR between 1952 and 2004. He listed revisions carried out under former Prime Ministers Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Narasimha Rao, A B Vajpayee and even during the Manmohan Singh government.

Shah also accused the Opposition of attempting to "normalise and formalise" infiltrators by resisting SIR in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah speaks in the Lok Sabha | PTI

An outstanding speech by Home Minister Amit Shah JI. With concrete facts, he highlighted diverse aspects of our electoral process and also exposed the lies of the Opposition

—Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

EXPRESS READ

HC quashes govt order on closing Aushadhi Kendras

Dharwad: The Dharwad bench of Karnataka High Court has quashed the state government's order directing the closure of all Jan Aushadhi Kendras (JAKs) operating on government hospital premises. The petitioners argued that the move was against public interest, as Jan Aushadhi Kendras provided medicines at highly affordable prices, benefitting below-poverty-line families | P5

Bill to curb hate speech tabled in state assembly

Belagavi: Amid strong opposition from the BJP, the state government tabled the Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crime (Prevention) Bill, in the Assembly on Wednesday. The bill proposes a jail term of up to 10 years and a maximum fine of Rs 1 lakh for hate speech. The BJP claimed that the bill is aimed at "snatching freedom of expression" of political opponents | P4

U.S. FED CUTS KEY RATES

The US Federal Reserve's Federal Open Market Committee on Wednesday cut key interest rates by 25 bps to 3.5%-3.75% — the lowest level in more than three years

All 4 tiger cubs rescued from Nagarahole die

KARTHIK K K @ Mysuru

NTCA guidelines warn against separating mothers and cubs during capture operations

Former wildlife warden

THE dramatic rescue of over 20 tigers and cubs near Nagarahole National Park within 45 days has ended in a tragedy as four of the cubs have died since they were pulled out of the wild and placed at the Chamundi Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Mysuru.

The deaths raised serious questions about violations of National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in handling tiger-human conflict cases.

The cubs had been rescued from a maize field near Nagarahole on November 30, two full days after their mother was tranquilised and captured by the forest department. All the four cubs were sent to the rescue, conservation and rehabilitation centre in Koorgalli, where their mother was also housed. But the reunification was hesitant and delayed, and all the cubs died between December 1 and 9, wildlife experts said.

The preliminary report suggested that one died due to cardiopulmonary failure, the second because of acute severe gastritis, another because of haemorrhagic gastroenteritis and encephalitis and the last due to feline panleukopenia. P7

IndiGo to rope in external tech experts for help

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

INDIGO'S top management has broken its silence on the largescale flight disruptions caused by the airline this month. Late on Wednesday night, the airline's chairman Vikram Singh Mehta said that external experts would be roped in to ensure no disruption occurs again.

Vikram Mehta

"The Board will involve external technical experts to... identify root causes and ensure corrective action so that this disruption never occurs again," Mehta said in a video message released by IndiGo.

"On 3rd December, an unexpected chain of events led to large-scale flight cancellations... I know how much distress this caused. I want to say, We are sorry!" he said.

The disruptions were due to a combination of internal and external events, adverse weather conditions, congestion, and implementation of/ and operation under the crew roster rules, Mehta added.

Tunnel road may affect 276 trees, security room in Lalbagh

MOHAMMED YACOOB @Bengaluru

AN initial survey conducted by the Greater Bengaluru Area (GBA) has estimated that the contentious Tunnel Road project will impact 276 trees in the iconic Lalbagh Botanical Garden.

Sources in the Urban Development Department (UDD) said the tunnel exit has been planned between Siddapura and Ashoka Pillar Circle near Lalbagh. The tunnel road from Hebbal Esteem Mall Junction to Silk Board KSRP Junction will likely impact the tree cover and some structures at the park.

"The initial survey indicates that 2,56,248.95 sqft of land is required for the tunnel exit. The trees to be cut are with a girth ranging between 0.3 metre and over 3 metre, as per the report given to UDD by officials," said a UDD official.

Documents accessed by TNIE showed that 96 trees are with a girth of 0.3 to 1 metre, 75 trees with 1-1.5 metre, 60 trees with 1.5-2 metre, 36 trees with 2-3 metre and nine trees with a girth of over 3 metre. The official said structures to be impacted include a stone masonry compound wall measuring 3.5 metre in height and 1,050 metre in length, 20 metre of wire fence, one gate, six lampposts, two borewells, six name boards, a toilet, a ticket counter, storage unit, and a security room. CONTINUED ON P2

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